



# Sam Brownback

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## News Release

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## **BROWNBACK INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO AWARD CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO POPE JOHN PAUL II**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback has introduced legislation to award Pope John Paul II the Congressional Gold Medal. Sixty-six Senators have cosponsored the Brownback legislation. Excerpts of his floor speech follow.

“Pope John Paul II is said to be the most recognized person in the world, having personally visited tens of millions, in almost every continent and country,” Brownback said. “He has been one of the greatest pastoral leaders of this century, fearlessly guiding the Catholic Church into the new millennium. Due to his tremendous faith and leadership he was elected bishop at a very early age, and elected to the papacy on October 16, 1978, at the age of 58.

“Though many people see the pope as an important statesman, diplomat and political figure, Pope John Paul II is much more than that. As spiritual leader to the world’s one billion Catholics, the pope has commenced a great dialogue with modern culture, one that transcends the boundaries of political or economic ideology.

“As have his predecessors of happy memory, he stands boldly as an ever vigilant sign of contradiction to a culture that is darkened by the clouds of death. In the face of this mounting storm, he has tirelessly proclaimed the need for a culture of life. The urgency of this message – the pope’s message – becomes more acute by the day; particularly at the beginning of the new millennium.

“The pope, having witnessed first-hand the brutal inhumanity of Nazi and communist regimes, understands, in a way few of us can appreciate, the true dignity of each and every human being. He is a crusader against the offences against human dignity that have transpired in the twentieth century. More than any other single person this century, Pope John Paul II has worked to protect the rights of each individual. As well, John Paul II has addressed almost every major question posed by the modern mind at the turn of the millennium.

“One of the gospel messages emphasized by the pope is the need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and with our sisters and brothers. A week before his historic personal pilgrimage to the Holy Land the pope asked forgiveness from God on behalf of Christians who were inactive, or who were not active enough in opposing the forces of evil that have ravaged humanity during the past century.

“He is indeed a man on a mission. His message was peacefully conveyed in the Middle East to peoples with whom he has obvious deep religious differences. His serenity in the midst of such turmoil, as well as his obvious love for all people should be a model for us all as we encounter people in our daily life with whom we radically disagree, or with whom we have had a difficult relationship.

“His trip to the Middle East is just one particular example. The pope’s dialogue with the modern era has taken him across the world, and has brought the Church into active conversation with people that many in the modern world have chosen to either forget or to ignore,” Brownback said.